



Data Trends

DATA AND ACCOUNTABILITY DEPARTMENT

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Limited English Proficient Students: Progress of 2008-09 High School Cohort

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Abstract

Students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) entering U.S. schools in grade 9 face a tight timeline to simultaneously learn English and graduate from high school in four or five years. Based on the cohort of LEP students who entered WCPSS for the first time in grade 9 in 2008-09 and did not transfer out, 46% graduated within 4.5 years. Some (17%) graduated while still LEP. Cohort graduates tended to start ninth grade with greater initial English proficiency, strong educational backgrounds obtained elsewhere, or high motivation and support. Unfortunately, 41% of the cohort dropped out of high school. Early warning indicators include not passing required courses and being retained (only one third of the cohort was able to be promoted every year). Only 20% participated in ESL support programs outside of school (36% of those with the lowest English proficiency participated).

Figure 1
*Graduation Status of 2008-09 Grade 9
LEP Cohort Students
(n=133)*

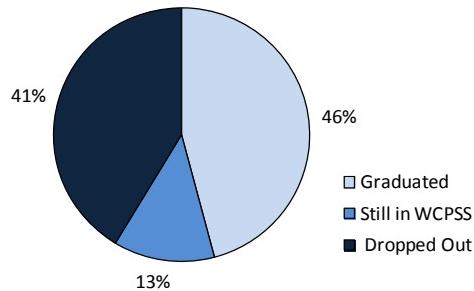


Table 1
*Progress of 2008-09 Grade 9 LEP Cohort
Students*

Progress Indicators as of June 2012	
N=164	
Passed English 1 Grade 9	79 (48%)
Passed Algebra 1 Grade 9	52 (32%)
n= 133	
Achieved English proficiency (exited LEP)	38 (29%)
Promoted each year (no retentions)	42 (32%)

Notes: Figure 1 and Table 1: The cohort contains 164 students; this N was used for English I and Algebra I passing rates. For graduation status (Figure 1) and English proficiency and promotion (Table 1), the 31 students who transferred out of WCPSS were excluded; the n was therefore 133 for these percentages.

We thank Amy Huebeler (contractor) for her diligent efforts in analyzing these data and drafting this report.

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Summary

LEP students who do not enter WCPSS until grade 9 have the dual challenge of mastering English and course work in four to five years in order to graduate. This study focuses on student outcomes and progress indicators for the cohort of ninth graders new to WCPSS in 2008-09 who had limited English proficiency. Table 2 summarizes key evaluation questions, findings, and data sources.

Table 2
2008-09 LEP High School Cohort: Key Questions and Findings

<i>What resources are devoted to ESL efforts?</i>
<p>Findings: Each WCPSS high school has at least one full-time or part-time ESL teacher who is supported by the central services ESL office. All LEP students are eligible for ESL services and receive services based on need and availability. Those with more limited English proficiency receive the most direct support from the ESL teacher.</p> <p>Grant or local funding is used to provide additional supports as budgets permit. For the 2008-09 cohort, ESL after-school programs, ESL summer school programs, ESL Academy, and/or ESL Study Island were available. Most programs focused on students with lower proficiency levels, while summer school was open to all LEP students. Only 20% of grade 9 LEP cohort students participated in these supports, with higher participation for those with the lowest English proficiency (36%). ESL teachers viewed all programs as being helpful, in particular ESL Academy and ESL Study Island (which are each only in one school).</p> <p>Data Sources: ESL documents; project participation records; interviews with central office staff and ESL teachers; program inventory.</p>
<i>Beyond ESL services, what other supports are available to LEP students?</i>
<p>Findings: Supports available to struggling students in all schools include NovaNet, Success Series for End-of-Course (EOC) classes, and bridging courses. In addition some schools have support available at lunch time or through SuccessMaker, Academy of Reading, or Academy of Math.</p> <p>Data Sources: Interviews with central office staff and ESL teachers; program inventory (participation records were not available for the cohort).</p>
<i>What are the expected outcomes of the ESL program? How successful were these new LEP high school students in graduating from high school?</i>
<p>Findings: The ESL program teaches English to LEP students so they may succeed in mainstream classes, exit LEP status, and graduate from high school. Of the new LEP students entering WCPSS in 2008-09 who did not transfer out (n=133), 61 (46%) had graduated, and 17 (13%) were still enrolled in 2012-13 and may graduate in five years. The rest (55 students or 41%) dropped out. Students with strong English upon entry to WCPSS, strong education in their native language, and/or strong family support and personal motivation were more likely to graduate. The four-year graduation rate of 42.9% for this cohort is much lower than the overall district four-year graduation rate of 80.6% (in 2012), but higher than the reported LEP graduation rate of 34.6% (which excludes those who exited LEP status). Only 27.4% of the LEP cohort (including transfers, N=164) exited LEP status in four years, so some students are graduating without having achieved English proficiency.</p> <p>Data Sources: ESL office staff and website (http://www.wcpss.net/departments/esl.html); ACCESS scores and LEP status; graduation and dropout records.</p>

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How do retention rates relate to dropout and graduation rates?

Findings: Being retained at least once in high school was very common for LEP students in the 2008-09 LEP cohort, with two in three being retained one or more times. Students being retained ranged from 44% of the graduates to 87% of dropouts to 94% of those still in WCPSS. Thus, retention is related to lower graduation rates. One retention was most common, but two was not uncommon. English I and Algebra I are stumbling blocks for getting past grade nine. Opportunities to recover credits, as well as the credits needed for graduation, vary somewhat across schools.

Data Sources: Historical grades file from NCWISE; Retention-Promotion-Graduation datasets.

Did students participate in the ESL support programs?

Were students served in ESL after-school, summer school, and/or ESL Academy more likely to graduate than those supported only through regular ESL services?

Findings: Only one in five of the LEP cohort students participated in the ESL support efforts beyond the regular ESL program. Students with the most limited ability in English were most likely to participate (but still only one in three). To determine the value of ESL support programs in making graduation more likely, more students, more qualitative data, and a stronger quantitative research design would be necessary. From the limited data available:

- Of those who participated in summer school (12 students), 83% (10) had graduated or were still in school. The after-school program had 4 of 7 students (57%) and the ESL Academy had 4 of 10 students (40%) with these positive outcomes. (The ESL Academy serves only students with little or no English.)
- Teachers believe sheltered instruction emphasizing English acquisition in grade 9 is critical for those with very limited English. However, such support is provided only at one school presently.
- Of the students who remained in WCPSS, there was no significant relationship detected between students graduating and extra support received (chi-square p-value 0.08). Students remaining in school did however participate in extra supports at a higher rate than those who graduated or dropped out (chi-square p-value < 0.01). While this does not prove that participation in the programs causes students to remain in school, these students may still graduate in five years.

Thus, participation in these additional supports is not reaching most students who may benefit, and evidence of effectiveness is mixed.

Data Sources: Program participation records; English proficiency (LEP status); enrollment, graduation, and dropout records.

What implications do these findings have for future services to LEP students?

Findings: Finding ways to reduce the high dropout rate and increase the graduation rate for high school students entering WCPSS with limited English is a big challenge—but short- and long-term solutions seem feasible.

- Create and maintain a long-term plan to boost student performance and raise graduation rates for students entering high school as LEP. Establishing regional high school ESL centers in order to provide more intensive and tailored support is one recommendation.
- Review supports currently available to LEP students in WCPSS high schools with lower graduation rates for LEP students and discuss short-term improvements.
- Arrive at a set of early warning indicators that students are getting off track for graduation and provide these data periodically to schools for follow-up.

Data Sources: Interviews with central office staff and ESL teachers, discussion with key central staff.

Introduction

Given enough time and instruction, strong evidence exists that LEP students can learn English and succeed in WCPSS. Districts report four-year graduation rates for cohorts of high school students. In the 2008-09 cohort, those WCPSS students who had exited LEP status at any point had the same graduation rate (nearly 83%) as those who were never LEP (see Appendix A.)

However, reaching graduation is a greater challenge for students with limited English proficiency (LEP) who do not enter WCPSS until the ninth grade. Collier (1987) found that students entering an ESL program from the ages of 12-15 required 6-8 years to reach academic language proficiency. Students who do not enter WCPSS until grade 9 do not have six years to attain sufficient mastery of English and master academic material if they are to graduate in four or five years. These LEP students also have years of personal and academic experiences that must be considered. In WCPSS, English as a Second Language (ESL) services are provided either directly in ESL classes or indirectly through a variety of supports. An ESL Academy has been available in one school, along with after-school and summer school services at seven and three schools, respectively.

The Data & Accountability (D&A) department has been studying the cohort of students new to WCPSS in grade 9 in 2008-09 who were found to have limited English proficiency. Only 27.4% of these students had exited LEP status by the end of four years (Baenen, 2013), with those with the highest initial English proficiency much more likely to exit and graduate. The current study examines graduation in relation to leading indicators and factors which support or serve as barriers to student success.

2008-09 Grade 9 LEP Student Cohort Description

Most information available on LEP students focuses on all LEP students at a particular point in time—snapshots. Monitoring a cohort of students over time provides a much better sense of success for students with limited English proficiency when they enter WCPSS and progress through the grades. A dataset was developed by D&A staff that contains demographic and testing data for all LEP students in WCPSS from 2008-09 through 2011-12. Data on participation in ESL summer school, after school, and ESL Academy are also included. Three cohorts were identified for a previous study—those who started in WCPSS in kindergarten and grades 6, 7, and 9 in 2008-09, with English proficiency and LEP exit rates examined over time (Baenen, 2013). This study focuses more closely on the grade 9 cohort. Data from other sources were added to this subset of 164 students. These include graduation, dropout, and promotion/retention status for each school year.

Using the expanded grade 9 cohort dataset, students were classified into one of four categories:

- Graduated
- Dropped out of school
- Still in WCPSS
- Transferred out of WCPSS

When combining datasets, if any discrepancies were found, the student's records in the student information system maintained by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NC DPI) were used as an official source of the current status (see Appendix B). While NC DPI's system is considered an authoritative data source, some records such as program rosters are not stored in this system and had to be obtained directly from schools. The school records have been checked as thoroughly as possible given that the data is from past years. This study has been designed to look back at a cohort of students and analyze the outcomes of the group; this includes examining relationships between attributes but not testing for causality.

Data Sources

This study was driven by the evaluation questions already shared in the summary. A basic description of data sources is provided here. Results are shared in relation to these questions, with additional detail on decision rules applied and analyses performed provided as needed. This study is exploratory in nature, with its main purpose being to describe the status and experiences of LEP students who do not enter WCPSS until grade 9. Causality cannot be determined from this study, but numerous questions for discussion and further analyses are raised by the results. D&A staff welcomes the opportunity to discuss future efforts and ways to introduce them which allow rigorous assessment of impact.

Tests of English Proficiency

In the 2008-09 school year, North Carolina school districts began using World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) tests to measure English proficiency of all LEP students. Proficiency is measured using two tests: WIDA-ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT™) and Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to State for English Language Learners (ACCESS for ELLs® or ACCESS).

Incoming students are screened at registration with a Home Language Survey, and the W-APT is administered to any student indicating a language other than English is spoken at home. The ACCESS for ELLs is administered to all LEP students each year to measure English proficiency and determine LEP status for the following school year.

At the high school level, both the W-APT and ACCESS test students in four domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. On both tests, students receive a raw score and a proficiency level, valued one through six, in each domain as well as an overall composite proficiency level. A student is considered LEP if any of the W-APT domain proficiency levels is less than five or if the composite proficiency level is less than five. Based on the W-APT test results, a student is assigned an ACCESS tier. There are three ACCESS tiers: Tier A (Beginning), Tier B (Intermediate), and Tier C (Advanced). The tier corresponds to which ACCESS test form is used. As illustrated in Table 3, a student's ACCESS tier corresponds to the English language proficiency description determined by the value of the composite proficiency level (CPL). For example, a student with an ACCESS CPL of 1.1 is considered "Entering" and would be assigned to Tier A. A student's proficiency is first determined by the CPL based on test results. The levels may also be described by the abilities of the student (ACCESS for ELLs: Interpretive

Guide, 2013). The student's tier is then determined based on the level of proficiency demonstrated (WIDA Consortium, 2013a).

Table 3
ACCESS Tier Descriptors

ACCESS Tier	English Language Proficiency Description	Composite Proficiency Level (CPL) Range
A	Entering	1 <= CPL < 2
	Beginning*	2 <= CPL < 3
	Developing	3 <= CPL < 4
	Expanding	4 <= CPL < 5
	Bridging	5 <= CPL < 6
	Reaching	CPL = 6

Sources: <http://www.wida.us/assessment/ACCESS/>; ESL office

*The second CPL range was renamed from Beginning to Emerging in 2012-13 but was Beginning for the time span of this cohort study. Some sources may refer to it as Emerging.

In order to exit LEP status, a student must score a minimum proficiency level of 4.0 in both the Reading and Writing domains as well as a CPL of at least 4.8. A student must achieve these scores on Tier B or C in a single administration of the test; any student assigned to Tier A may not exit LEP status regardless of the test score (source: WCPSS ESL office).

ESL Central Staff Interviews and Records

ESL central staff provided key documents and information about the various support services available to students through their office and student participation in each service. They also provided access to and information about proficiency test scores. Findings were also shared with key staff to check accuracy and to discuss the implications of the findings.

Teacher Interviews

There are 26 high schools in WCPSS. Two of these schools were new in 2012-13 and therefore would not be represented in the data used for this study. The four East Wake high schools share a campus and some resources, including one ESL teacher, and are counted together as one school for this study. There were 18 high schools with at least one student in the grade 9 LEP cohort based on the school where the W-APT was administered in 2008-09. To supplement the results of the previous study on exit rates (Baenen, 2013) as well as obtain additional qualitative data for the grade 9 cohort, we conducted interviews with ESL teachers at five of the 18 schools.

Schools were selected for interviews representative of the population based on how many cohort students were at the school, whether programs such as ESL Academy were offered, and the percent of students who graduated in four years. Table 4 shows the characteristics used to select the five schools, with the deciding factors highlighted in bold. The graduation rate and program descriptions will be described in more detail later in this report. Two schools (D and E) were chosen because they had the highest number of students represented in the cohort, with 30 each.

School E also offered an after-school program for LEP students for two years. Schools A and C each had a high percentage of cohort students with low W-APT scores who were also in the 2012 graduation cohort and who graduated in four years or less. School C also offered an after-school program for LEP students in 2010-11 and 2011-12. School B was an ESL Academy program site and, of the three program sites, had the most ESL Academy participants who were in the grade 9 LEP cohort.

Table 4
Characteristics of Schools Selected for Interviews

School	ESL Teachers in 2012-13	Students in LEP Cohort	Cohort Students with Low English Proficiency who Graduated*	ESL Academy Site	Summer School Program Site in 2010 & 2011	After-School Program Site in 2010-11 & 2011-12
A	2	16	4	No	Yes	No
B	1	13	0	2008-09 to 2011-12	No	No
C	1	7	3	No	No	Yes
D	2	30	3	No	No	No
E	2	30	3	No	No	Yes

Note: Bolded characteristics were used as selection criteria.

* These are students who were in the 2012 four-year graduation rate cohort who entered WCPSS in 2008-09 with a W-APT score in the first or second quartile and who graduated in four years or less.

An ESL teacher at each of the five selected schools was asked a number of general questions about serving students with different levels of English proficiency, strengths and challenges of these students, supports available to LEP students at the school, and how W-APT and ACCESS results are used to make decisions. Teachers were also asked a couple of questions specific to students in the cohort who stood out based on program participation or graduation, and these questions were used to develop success stories. The general questions are listed in Appendix C. Responses to the questions and student success stories and implications of these stories are shared throughout the report.

Supports Available

ESL Program

What are the expected outcomes of the ESL program?

The ESL program teaches English to LEP students so they may succeed in mainstream classes, exit LEP status, and graduate from high school. For students new to WCPSS in grade 9 who have limited ability in English, the goal is to reach graduation—even if it takes five or more years.

What resources are devoted to ESL efforts?

Each WCPSS high school has at least one ESL teacher who is supported by the central services ESL office. The number of teachers per school is based on an allotment formula that takes into consideration the amount of funding available as well as the number of LEP students at the school. The number of teachers is calculated by half positions based on the allotted months of employment. For example, a high school that is projected to have 93-129 LEP students in 2013-14 will receive 18 months of employment, which translates to 1.5 teaching positions. A school with very few LEP students will have only one part-time position. See Appendix D for a breakdown of months of employment by half positions based on the number of LEP students for 2013-14.

In teacher interviews, the primary source of support at each school was identified as the ESL teacher and ESL classes that include daily instruction and tutoring until students are proficient enough to spend more time in mainstream classes. ESL teachers also provide tutoring to more proficient students as well as support at other times such as lunch and outside the school day. The teachers also attend conferences and collaborate with the regular classroom teachers. Services are tailored to students' needs.

Six of the eight schools offering after-school programs and both summer school sites had students in the grade 9 LEP cohort, though participation of cohort students in these programs was low and varied by school. (See Appendix E for a listing of schools offering these extra supports.) At one of the ESL Academy sites, six students from the cohort were in the program. These three programs are factored into some of the analyses later in this report. The other programs and services were all mentioned in interviews with ESL teachers as helping ESL students' achievement.

According to the teachers interviewed for this study, in addition to initial English proficiency, student success strongly depends on factors such as the student's formal education before entering the United States, motivation to learn, and how often the student uses English outside of school. In interviews, ESL teachers identified various supports and factors contributing to success in high school. Students require different levels of support from the school depending on several factors, including but not limited to initial English proficiency. ESL teachers agreed that prior schooling and literacy in the native language are strong indicators of academic success. Even if a student knows little or no English, a strong educational background means the student already has the background concepts to build upon. High school teachers are trained to teach

***Success Story #1***

This male student was not a great student, but he was highly motivated to learn English and really wanted to graduate. He regularly attended tutoring sessions offered by his teachers, always asked for help from ESL and English teachers, and made sure he got his modifications. He repeated some classes and doubled up and stayed after school. His senior research paper was a challenge but he pulled it off and graduated in four years. His teachers believed in him and helped him succeed.



students at a higher level, which can add frustration when attempting to teach students with little education in addition to limited or no English proficiency.

Other characteristics that ESL teachers believe help a student succeed are motivation and support outside of school from family and/or a community organization or church. While a family with more educational background is helpful, teachers feel it is more important that the family value and support education regardless of background.

The ESL office and ESL teachers identified several programs and supports in place at schools that help LEP students succeed, see Tables 5A and 5B. In addition, teachers identified clubs, activities, mentoring, and tutoring in order to assimilate students into the school and culture while still allowing the students to embrace who they are.

In 2012-13, 19 of the 26 WCPSS high schools had one ESL teacher who provided these services, six schools had two teachers, and one school had three. In interviews with the ESL office and ESL teachers, as well as a review of the 2011-12 D&A program inventory, several programs and services were identified as supports for this cohort of LEP students, see Table 5A and 5B and Appendix E.

Success Story #2

This female student had lived with her grandmother since birth and met her mother upon joining her in the United States. She was a serious student here, a good student back in El Salvador, and wanted to go to college. She became involved with a Hispanic leaders club and had a job outside of school where she needed to use English.

She was highly motivated and graduated in four years. She asked for help as needed, had three hours of ESL per day at first, and quickly learned to speak English. She was in ESL classes through her Junior year. She transitioned to mainstream classes in her Senior year, seeking help from the ESL teacher in the first semester, then going to her classroom teachers in the second semester.

Table 5A
ESL Support for LEP Students

<i>Immigrant and LEP after-school program</i>
<p>Services and Goals: In the 2010-11 and 2011-12 school years, the Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) implemented an after-school program in order to assist immigrants and LEP students in making academic progress. The short-term goal of this program was to increase English proficiency, with a long-term goal of helping students exit LEP status more quickly than would be possible without the service. Additionally, improvement in academic achievement was an intermediate and long-term goal, (Baenen, 2012).</p>
<p>Program availability: Five high schools offered programs in 2010-11, and seven had programs in 2011-12. Each school was given the task of using data to design a program that would meet the needs of their students.</p>
<i>LEP summer school program</i>
<p>Services and goals: The ESL office coordinated a district-wide summer school program for LEP students to continue services during summer break in 2010, 2011, and 2012. In 2010 and 2011 (and planned for 2013), the focus was on serving students with low Reading and Writing scores on the ACCESS test. The program was modified in 2012 to serve primarily immigrant students at three high school sites with larger immigrant populations. Services provided are meant to minimize regression of English learning over the summer break.</p>
<p>Program availability: The program was offered to high school LEP students at two school sites in 2010 and 2011 and at three school sites with large immigrant populations in 2012. In 2013, the program will be available only at the elementary school level.</p>
<i>ESL Study Island</i>
<p>Services and goals: This is an internet-based application that allows students to practice literacy skills. The program administers an assessment at the beginning of the school year in order to create an individualized program for each student. The ESL teacher can also schedule post-assessments. Students may use the program at school or at home, and the teacher can monitor progress and issue certificates for lessons mastered. This program is intended to increase English proficiency and grades for ESL students.</p>
<p>Program availability: ESL Study Island is used by one WCPSS high school, and according to the ESL office staff, others are interested in purchasing it as well.</p>
<i>ESL Academy</i>
<p>Services and goals: Sheltered English instruction and more intense support is offered to students with the lowest English proficiency—those new to the U.S. at the high school levels who speak little or no English. The purpose of this literacy program is to help newcomers to the U.S. graduate prior to aging out of public schools. Transportation is not provided to an ESL Academy site, so participation has been limited to students attending schools offering the program.</p>
<p>Program availability: The ESL Academy was offered in WCPSS beginning in 2008-09 at three high schools and was still offered at one of the three schools (Cary High) in 2012-13. The program is available at any grade level. It is structured such that a student attends a regular ESL class for 90 minutes, learns literacy skills for an additional 90 minutes, and attends basic regular classes for the remainder of the day (two blocks).</p>

Other Program Supports

What supports were available to LEP students beyond ESL?

Other supports are available to any student who is struggling to master course work at the high school level, see Table 5B. Many LEP students new to the U.S. and WCPSS in grade 9 could likely benefit from these services. However, records were not available to determine participation for this study. In teacher interviews, SuccessMaker was mentioned as being particularly helpful for students with lower proficiency, SMART lunch as having benefits for all students, and NovaNet as very helpful for ESL students in need of credit recovery.

Table 5B

Supports Beyond ESL Available at the High School Level for Struggling Students

SuccessMaker
Services and goals: This computer program allows students to practice reading and math skills. It is designed for students in grades K-8 but is also used for high school students who are well below grade level as well. This program is intended to increase proficiency and bring students up to grade level.
Program availability: In the 2012-13 school year, SuccessMaker was used at 23 WCPSS schools, primarily elementary and middle as well as a few high schools.
NovaNET
Services and goals: This computer program allows students to practice math skills and to earn credits in a variety of subjects. NovaNET is intended to increase proficiency and grades as well as recover credits which can help students graduate on time.
Program availability: NovaNET is offered in WCPSS at all high schools and some middle schools. <i>(Bulgakov-Cooke, 2010)</i>
Success Series
Services and goals: Videos have been produced by WCPSS teachers and are available on the internet. This supplement to classroom instruction may be used to catch up on instruction or prepare for End-of -Course (EOC) tests. The goal is to improve grades and test scores.
Program availability: The videos are available to all students online at http://www.wcpss.net/students/homework-help .
SMART Lunch
Services and goals: The school day is structured to provide an extended lunch period, SMART (Students Maximizing Achievement Relationships and Time) lunch, in which students can receive extra academic support. The program is meant to improve students' achievement and test scores.
Program availability: The program began at one high school in 2006-07 and has spread to over half of WCPSS high schools.

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<p style="text-align: right;"><i>Cont'd from previous page</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Bridging Courses</p> <p>Services and goals: These are support courses for students who do not have the requisite background in a particular subject area. They are targeted to grade 9 students but are available to any students who need the extra support. Bridging courses help students gain the background knowledge needed to succeed in required courses. Courses are offered in reading, mathematics, writing support, and study skills.</p> <p>Program availability: All high schools may offer these courses. Availability depends on the school.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Academy of Reading and Math</p> <p>Services and goals: These computer-based programs focus on establishing foundation skills in reading and math. These tools are sometimes offered as an elective or as a support in a course.</p> <p>Program Availability: Most high schools have one or both programs.</p>

Grade 9 LEP Cohort Results

In general, the goal outcomes for LEP students in the ESL program are that they learn English sufficiently to succeed in mainstream classes, exit LEP status, and graduate from high school. As indicated earlier, this is particularly challenging for LEP students who do not enter WCPSS until grade 9. Results for each of these goal areas for the 2008-09 cohort follow.

LEP Exit Rates

In the first D&A department study (Baenen, 2013) of the 2008-09 LEP cohort, we found *only 27.4% had exited LEP status by the end of four years. Only students in the group with the highest initial English proficiency had high exit rates (75.6%)*, see Table 5. The analysis of exit rates in the previous D&A study was summarized by groups based on W-APT quartile. The quartiles (25%, 50%, 75%, and 100%) of the 164 students' adjusted composite W-APT scores were calculated, and the values of these quartiles were used as maximum values to divide students into four groups. As shown in Table 6, less than 10% of those entering WCPSS with the lowest English proficiency (Groups 1 and 2) were able to exit LEP status in four years. About one in four of those with somewhat higher initial proficiency (quartile group 3) were able to exit LEP status, and about three in four of those with the highest initial English proficiency.

Table 6
W-APT and Four-Year ACCESS Mastery Results for 2008-09 Students in Grade 9

W-APT Estimates				Number of Students Achieving ACCESS Mastery (Exiting LEP status)								
Group*	Max Value	N	Mean	Exiting**	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	Exited by 2011-12			
1	1.00	50	1.00	Yes	0	0	0	1	1			
				No	50	42	33	25	(2.0%)			
				Not Tested	0	8	17	24				
2	1.35	34	1.34	Yes	0	0	1	1	2			
				No	23	27	22	12	(5.9%)			
				Not Tested	11	7	11	20				
3	2.64	39	2.00	Yes	3	3	4	1	11			
				No	28	26	16	8	(28.2%)			
				Not Tested	8	7	13	20				
4	5.55	41	4.16	Yes	16	8	3	4	31			
				No	15	11	7	0	(75.6%)			
				Not Tested	10	6	7	10				
All LEP Students in Grade 9				Yes	19	11	8	7	45			
				No	116	106	78	45	(27.4%)			
				Not Tested	29	28	48	74				

* The maximum values for each group are determined by the quartile estimates of W-APT scores for this group of WCPSS LEP students. The score used for each student is the W-APT adjusted composite proficiency level.

**The number of students “not tested” can include students who exited LEP status in a previous year, students who left WCPSS by transferring or dropping out, or students who were not tested for another reason.

Source: Baenen, 2013

Interviews with ESL teachers revealed that W-APT results must be used in combination with other information when assessing a student’s English proficiency. Teachers felt that a low W-APT score determines LEP status but is not always an indication of how well a student will perform in school. Therefore, the teachers interviewed believed it should be used in combination with other tools to determine the level of services to provide. Teachers also review a student’s prior schooling and meet with the student and student’s family when possible.

Despite their low initial test scores, some students in groups 1 (36%) and 2 (24%) had graduated by March 2013. Group 1 and 2 students were also more likely than group 3 and 4 students to still be enrolled in 2012-13 (Table 7).

Table 7
Current Status of Grade 9 LEP Cohort Students by W-APT Group (Transfers Excluded)

W-APT Quartile Group	Graduated		Still in WCPSS		Dropped out of School		Total in W-APT Group
	Number in Group	Percent of Group	Number in Group	Percent of Group	Number in Group	Percent of Group	
1	17	36%	9	19%	21	45%	47
2	6	24%	6	24%	13	52%	25
3	18	58%	2	6%	11	35%	31
4	20	67%	0	0%	10	33%	30
Total	61	46%	17	13%	55	41%	133

Note: The status of these students is reported as of March 2013. Transfers had a transcript request, indicating they had enrolled in another school or system, but we do not know their subsequent enrollment status. Quartile 1 had the lowest English proficiency upon entry to WCPSS, with Quartile 4 having the highest.

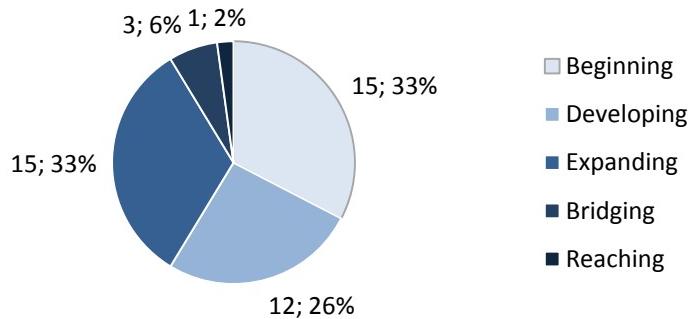
Based on teacher interviews, students in group 1 who graduated are likely to have had strong schooling in their native language, possibly were able to speak some English when coming to WCPSS, and/or had very strong educational support at home. Based on ACCESS English proficiency level descriptions, students at the higher levels on the scale (CPL ≥ 5) can handle some or all academic language in English, while those at the lowest level may understand pictures or other graphic representations (WIDA Consortium, 2013b) and need time to develop the language. Already having an understanding of the material from good schooling aids this process tremendously.

Of those cohort students who took the ACCESS in 2011-12, four were Bridging or Reaching, the highest achievement levels, while a third remained Beginning (Figure 2).

Success Story #3

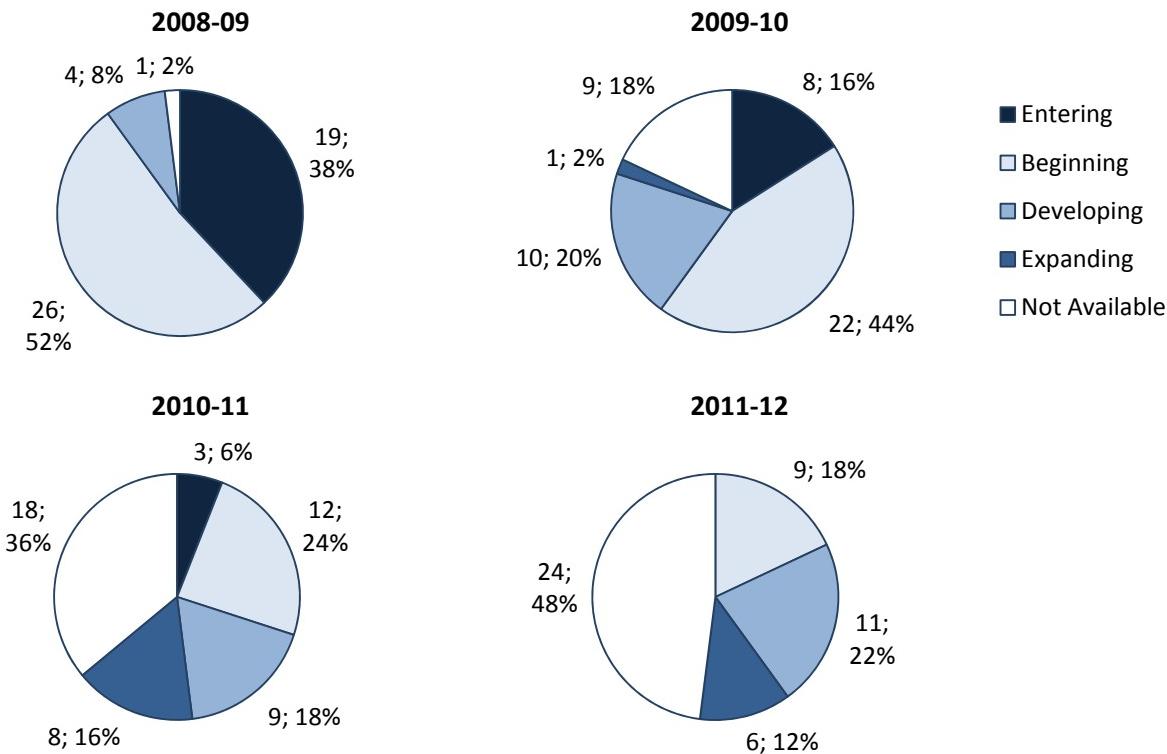
Two siblings who attended one WCPSS high school started out with very low proficiency scores but graduated on time. They did know some English, were highly literate in their own language, motivated, and disciplined. They lived in poverty but did not let that stand in their way and did not succumb to peer pressure. They received a refurbished computer from a nonprofit organization. They were not afraid to be smart and always answered when called upon. Their family was very supportive as they were the first generation on both sides of the family to graduate from high school.

Figure 2
Results for Grade 9 LEP Cohort Students taking ACCESS in 2011-12 (n=45)



To illustrate how much growth in English proficiency was shown for students in group 1 over time, Figure 3 shows the proficiency based on ACCESS test results each year. The number of students at the Entering and Beginning levels both decrease over time, while the percentage of group 1 who were Developing or Expanding increased from 8% in 2008-09 to 34% in 2011-12. Students who are Entering or Beginning may understand pictures or general language and have difficulty communicating effectively. Developing and Expanding students have learned some more specific language and are better able to communicate meaningfully.

Figure 3
W-APT Group 1: English Proficiency over Time (n=50)



Note: The students who do not have scores available either left WCPSS by graduating, transferring, or dropping out, or they did not take the test for another reason.

The Group 1 student who exited LEP status in 2011-12 (Table 6) started off at the Beginning level in 2008-09 and 2009-10 and moved up to Expanding in 2010-11 and 2011-12, exiting LEP with a high Expanding score in 2011-12.

Graduation Rate

For students entering WCPSS at grade 9 with very limited English, graduation in four years is not always a realistic goal. Graduation in five years (or even longer) is still a success for these students. At schools where a service such as ESL Academy or other sheltered English instruction is offered, LEP students who enter WCPSS with a low level of English proficiency often spend the first year in school learning the language with heavy ESL classes and limited mainstream courses. While some of these students do catch up on coursework and graduate on time, others may take five years or more.

Four-year graduation rates are calculated each year for the district as well as for certain subgroups including LEP. The WCPSS 2012 four-year graduation rate cohort includes all WCPSS students who entered grade 9 for the first time during the 2008-09 school year. Two-thirds (112 of 164, or 68%) of the grade 9 LEP cohort was also in the 2012 four-year graduation rate cohort (Table 8). A student may not have been in the graduation cohort for a few reasons:

- Students who transferred out of WCPSS are not counted in the graduation rate cohort.
- Students who have been in grade 9 in a previous school year *outside* WCPSS are not counted in the graduation rate cohort.
- Students who have been in grade 9 in WCPSS prior to 2008-09 are not in the 2012 four-year cohort *but* may be in a previous year's cohort.

In order to calculate a graduation rate for this group for comparison to other graduation rate statistics, each student is categorized based on inclusion in the 2012 four-year graduation rate cohort. A simple percentage of the total number of grade 9 cohort students is not an accurate representation of the graduation rate because of the conditions listed above. A frequency count of the current status by graduation rate inclusion is shown in Table 8.

Table 8
March 2013 Status and Graduation Rate Inclusion of 2008-09 Grade 9 LEP Cohort Students

Status	In 2012 Graduation Rate Cohort		Total
	Yes	No	
Graduated	52	9	61
In four years or less	48	7*	55
In more than four years**	4	2	6
Dropped out of school	44	11	55
Still in WCPSS	16	1	17
Transferred out of WCPSS	N/A	31	31
TOTAL	112	52	164

* Students who were not in the graduation rate cohort but who did graduate in four years were found to be repeating grade 9 in 2008-09.

**Students who graduated in more than four years graduated in the summer of 2012 or during 2012-13.

Since we do not know what happened to those who transferred out of WCPSS, focusing on the 133 students from this cohort who stayed in WCPSS is informative. Overall, 46% graduated, but nearly as many (41%) dropped out. Some (13%) were still enrolled in WCPSS, Figure 4.

Of the 133 students, 55% had a home language of Spanish, 32% had one of a variety of Asian home languages, and 14% had other home language backgrounds. The percentage of students with a home language of Spanish who graduated was 37%, somewhat lower than for those with Asian languages or other languages (57%). This may reflect initial language proficiency and educational backgrounds.

Several percentages may be calculated using the status of the grade 9 LEP cohort students. *The most accurate comparison to published graduation rates is the percent of LEP cohort students who graduated in four years or less and who were in the 2012 graduation rate cohort, which comes to 42.9% (48 of 112).* This is below the published WCPSS overall graduation rate of 80.6% but higher than the overall WCPSS LEP graduation rate by 8.3 percentage points (Table 9). Both LEP groups represented in Table 9 are a subset of the overall WCPSS graduation rate cohort. The “WCPSS four-year graduation cohort, LEP only” group contains students who remained LEP at graduation, while the “2008-09 grade 9 LEP cohort inclusion” group contains students who were LEP in 2008-09 but may or may not have been LEP at the time of graduation. The WCPSS four-year graduation cohort, LEP only, also includes students who entered WCPSS prior to grade 9. Thus, the 42.9% rate provides a better sense of how students entering WCPSS as LEP in grade 9 fare over time, see Table 9.

Figure 4
Graduation Status as of March 2013 (4.5 Years)

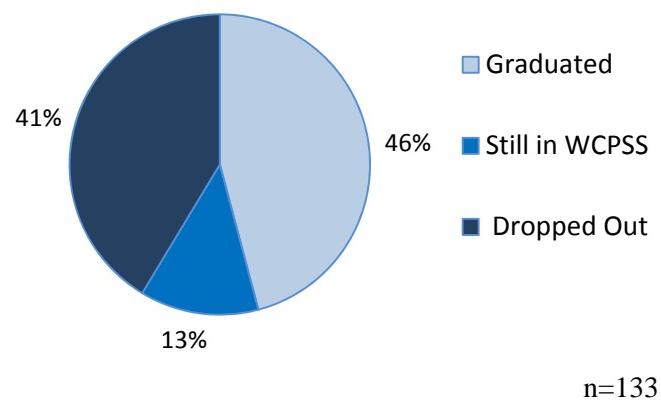


Table 9
2012 Four-Year Graduation Rate Comparison by Group

Group	Four-Year Graduation Rate
Overall WCPSS four-year graduation rate cohort	80.6%
WCPSS four-year graduation cohort, LEP only	34.6%
2008-09 grade 9 LEP cohort inclusion	42.9%

Source: Regan, 2013

Dropout Rates

For the 55 students of the 164 in the 2008-09 grade 9 LEP cohort who had “dropout” as their most recent known status, only one student was considered a dropout more than once from 2008-09 through mid-year 2012-13. Table 10 shows the number of dropouts by current status, so any student who dropped out and later returned to school would have a current status other than dropout. No students who dropped out later returned to graduate, though there is one student who dropped out and is back in school who may graduate. Two other students dropped out and returned and later transferred out of WCPSS. Thus, this data makes it appear that once a LEP student drops out, they are unlikely to return to WCPSS (although we know some do come and go who are not counted formally as dropouts due to timing).

The LEP population tends to be more transient than other groups, with students transferring between schools and sometimes moving back and forth between countries. This is not fully reflected in the dropout rate for LEP students and is difficult to capture based on available records. If a student leaves in the middle of the reporting year and returns at the beginning of the following year, the student is not counted as a dropout for the reporting year. If a student leaves at the end of a reporting year but does not re-enroll until after the 20th day of the following school year, the student is counted as a dropout in the reporting year. Therefore, looking at a particular student’s record may reveal that the student has been in and out of WCPSS, while the student may never be technically considered to be a dropout.

NC Dropout Rate Calculation

Data from two school years is used to determine the annual dropout status of a student. The reporting year for DPI begins on the first day of school that year and ends on the last day of summer before school begins the following year. Any student who was enrolled during the reporting year but who was not enrolled on day 20 of school in the subsequent school year is considered a dropout. Transfers from WCPSS and graduates are not counted as dropouts. Other students not counted as dropouts are those who are absent due to suspension, illness, or death (NC DPI, 2012). An individual student may be counted as a dropout in more than one year but only once during a particular reporting year.

Table 10
Current Status and Number of Times Dropped Out for 2008-09 Grade 9 LEP Cohort Students

Status	Number of Dropouts between 2008-09 and 2012-13		Total
	Once	Twice	
Graduated	0	0	0
Dropped out of school	54	1	55
Still in WCPSS	1	0	1
Transferred out of WCPSS	2	0	2
TOTAL	57	1	58

Note: Student status as of March 2013. Three students who left WCPSS at some point during the 2012-13 school year are counted as dropouts as that is the most recent known status.

Promotion/Retention and Credits Earned

How does retention in grade relate to graduation rates?

High school students must attain credits in certain courses in order to be promoted at each grade level. The requirements for promotion and graduation vary slightly depending on the school attended and on the student's course of study; these requirements are summarized in Table 11 for all schools that were open prior to 2012-13. Course of study options include Career Prep, College Tech Prep, Future-Ready (formerly College Prep), and Occupational Course of Study (OCC). Of the 26 WCPSS high schools, 18 require 26 credits to graduate, 6 require 20 credits, and the 2 leadership academies that opened in 2012-13 follow the Future-Ready Core and require 22 credits. All but two schools operate on a block schedule, which offers 32 opportunities to earn credits. Thus, students have at least six course slots to repeat courses in block schedule schools if needed.

Table 11 shows the difference in credits required each year and overall, for schools requiring either 26 or 20 credits total.

Table 11
Credit Requirements for Grade Level Promotion and Graduation (n=24 Schools)

Grade Level	Credits Required in Each Subject Area (18 schools/6 schools)*					Cumulative Credits (18 schools/6 schools)
	English	Mathematics	Social Studies	Science	Additional	
9 English I			2 credits		3 credits/ 1 credit	6/4
10 English II			1 credit in each subject area		2 credits/ none	12/8
11 English III			Depends on course of study			18/14
12 English IV						26/20 (22 for OCC)
Graduation	4 credits	3 credits	3 credits (2 for OCC)	3 credits (2 for OCC)	13/7 (9 for OCC)	26/20 (22 for OCC)

Notes: *The 18 schools requiring 26 credits are always shown first followed by the 6 requiring 20 credits (e.g., 6/4).

- OCC = Occupational Course of Study
- These promotion and graduation requirements take into account that the students in this cohort entered grade 9 no later than the 2008-09 school year. The requirements listed here apply to this cohort and not necessarily to students entering grade 9 at a later time. Not represented in this table are Wake Young Men's Leadership Academy and Wake Young Women's Leadership Academy both of which opened in 2012-13 and have requirements based on the Future-Ready Core.
- Some high schools have additional graduation requirements such as community service.

Source: High School Program Planning Guide: 2012-2013

Table 12 shows the number of retentions for LEP students in this cohort over four years by students' current status. The most striking finding is that *two in three of the LEP students in this cohort were retained at least once—only one third were able to complete high school meeting all requirements each year.*

- Only the graduate group had fewer than half the students retained. It is interesting to note that 44% (27) of students who have graduated were retained at least once in the four year period.
- Of those who dropped out, over 87% were retained at least once; of those still in school, over 94% were retained at least once. One or two retentions were most common.
- Most students in this cohort (61%) who transferred from WCPSS had been retained once or twice prior to transferring.
- A small percentage of students (13%) dropped out without having been retained.

Table 12
Number of Retentions (2008-09 through 2011-12) by Current Status of Students

Current Status	Number Students	Number of Retentions					Number of Retentions 0	Percent of Retentions 0	Percent of Retentions 1 to 4
		0	1	2	3	4			
Graduated	61	34	22	4	1	0	34	55.7%	44.3%
Dropped Out	55	7	30	13	4	1	7	12.7%	87.3%
Still in WCPSS	17	1	7	5	2	2	1	5.9%	94.1%
Transferred	31	12	10	8	1	0	12	38.7%	61.3%
Total	164	54	69	30	8	3	54	32.9%	67.1%

Note: The number of retentions does not include any summer school data.

Students in all schools have some opportunities to make up credits failed. Retaking the same course is one option, with opportunities more plentiful in block schedule schools. Students may also earn course credits from credit recovery opportunities such as summer school or NovaNet. Finally, some students may be granted credit for some courses taken before entering WCPSS. Students are retained for one of the four reasons listed in Table 13. Most (94%) grade 9 cohort students who were retained in grade 9 after 2008-09 were retained for academic reasons, meaning they did not earn sufficient credits for promotion. Unfortunately, the code used to identify the reason for retention is not very specific, and it could relate to attendance issues (which is listed separately but seldom used). A study of ESL students in secondary school found that students with higher levels of English proficiency had a greater chance of passing high school assessments than those at lower levels (Wang & Modarresi, 2011).

Table 13
Reasons for Retentions of Grade 9 LEP Cohort Students, 2008-09

Reason	Number of Students
Academic Reasons	88
Administrative Reasons	2
Attendance Reasons	1
State Standards	3
Total	94

All students are required to pass English I in order to be promoted from grade 9, and some teachers interviewed feel this course is a big stumbling block on the students' path to success. Of the 164 LEP cohort students, 124 (76%) had passed English I by the end of 2011-12 (Table 14). About 64% of those who passed did so by the end of 2008-09. For the remainder who passed, most were able to pass the following year (2009-10), but nine did not pass until 2010-11 or 2011-12, and 40 cohort students have no record of passing (most were dropouts or transfers). Since four English credits are required for graduation, this is indeed a key stumbling block.

Table 14
Credit History for Grade 9 LEP Cohort Students Taking English I (N=164)

Semester	Received	School Year					Total
		Prior to 2008-09	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	
First Semester	Yes	0	12	11	1	1	25
	No	4	4	8	2	0	18
Second Semester	Yes	14	42	19	3	0	78
	No	5	22	11	5	0	43
Full Year	Yes	1	10	6	2	2	21
	No	0	14	9	6	2	31
Total	Yes	15	64	36	6	3	124
	No	9	40	28	13	2	92
Total with no record of English I credit received							40

Note: The total number of students includes students who later retook the course whether they later received credit or not, so a particular student could be included in the total not receiving credit more than once.

A study of promotion/retention in WCPSS has found that nearly two-thirds of students retained in grade 9 in 2011-12 were missing English credit (Paeplow, 2013). To further illustrate the impact of English I on retention, a cross-tabulation of 2008-09 English I credit and retention reasons is shown in Table 15. About 77% of LEP cohort students who were retained in 2008-09 for academic reasons did not receive English I credit that year. It is important to note that this may not be the only reason for retention for academic reasons as the other credits shown in Table 11 must also be achieved.

Table 15

2008-09 English Credits Received by Year-End Promotion or Retention of Grade 9 LEP Cohort

2008-09 Year-End Status	English I Credit Received in 2008-09		Total
	Yes	No	
Promoted	55	0	55
Retained	9	34	43
Academic Reasons	9	30	39
Other Reasons	0	3	3
Reason unknown*	0	1	1
Total	64	34	98

*This student had left before the end of the 2008-09 school year and returned in 2009-10, so promotion/retention status is based on the grade level upon return.

About 62% of the 164 LEP cohort students passed Algebra I, fewer than the 76% passing English I. Of the 102 who passed Algebra I, 52 (51%) passed by the end of 2008-09 (Table 16), and a third passed in 2009-10. Of the 62 who did not receive credit, 17 took the course and failed while most of the remainder either dropped out or transferred.

Table 16

Credit History for Grade 9 LEP Cohort Students Taking Algebra I (N=164)

Semester	Algebra I Credit Received	School Year					Total
		Prior to 2008-09	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	
First Semester	Yes	1	6	8	3	1	26
	No	0	1	1	0	1	3
Second Semester	Yes	8	32	17	8	3	78
	No	3	0	5	3	0	11
Full Year	Yes	5	0	9	0	1	21
	No	1	0	2	0	0	3
Total	Yes	14	38	34	11	5	102
	No	4	1	8	3	1	17
Total with no record of Algebra I credit received							62

Notes: The total number of students includes only students who received credit (102), so students counted as not receiving credit here are those who later did pass the course.

Any students receiving a half-credit for part I of Algebra I are not counted as receiving credit since two half credits must be received to fulfill the graduation requirement.

Thus, course failures and retention are related to dropout and graduation. Analyses by Paeplow (2013) indicate students are more likely to overcome one retention and graduate than more than one. Thus, failing a course first semester or being retained at the end of grade 9 are key early warning indicators schools can utilize to identify LEP students who may need additional support.

Program Participation

To what extent do LEP students participate in support efforts beyond regular ESL services?

Only 18.9% (31 of 164) of LEP students in the 2008-09 cohort participated in ESL Academy, after-school, or summer school programs. Those who did not transfer out of WCPSS have the most complete data and therefore are the best group to examine. Of these 133 students, one in five (20.3%) participated in one or more services beyond regular ESL, compared to just over 1 in 10 of the students who transferred from WCPSS (12.9%). Few of the students who graduated in four years participated in the ESL Academy, summer school, or after-school programs (8 of 61 or 13%). Overall, twelve cohort students participated in summer school, with nine in the ESL Academy and six in the after-school program, see Table 17.

Table 17
Student Outcomes Across W-APT Groups and Program Participation

Current Status	W-APT		Regular ESL Only	ESL Academy Participants	Summer School Participants	After-School Participants
	Quartile Group	Number of Students				
Graduated	1	17	14	0	3	0
	2	6	4	1	1	0
	3	18	15	1	0	2
	4	20	20	0	0	0
	Subtotal	61	53	2	4	2
Dropped out	1	21	14	5	1	1
	2	13	12	0	1	0
	3	11	11	0	0	0
	4	10	9	0	0	1
	Subtotal	55	46	5	2	2
In school	1	9	2	1	4	2
	2	6	3	1	2	0
	3	2	2	0	0	0
	4	0	0	0	0	0
	Subtotal	17	7	2	6	2
Non-Transfers	Total	133	106	9	12	6
Transfers	1	3	3	0	0	0
	2	9	5	1	2	1
	3	8	8	0	0	0
	4	11	11	0	0	0
Transfers	Total	31	27	1	2	1
Grand Total		164	133	10	14	7

Note: Program participation is in at least one school year. Programs were not offered at all schools.

The percentage of LEP students who participated in these additional services was greater for those with lower levels of English proficiency, see Table 18. However, all groups were quite low, ranging from 36% for those in the lowest quartile for English proficiency (group 1) to 3% for those in the highest quartile for initial English proficiency (group 4).

Table 18
*Program Service and Student Outcomes by W-APT Proficiency
 for Those Whose Last School Was in WCPSS*

W-APT Quartile Group	Current Status	Total Number of Students	Service Beyond Reg. ESL	% Service Beyond ESL	Regular ESL Only	% ESL Only
1	Graduated	17	3	17.6%	14	82.4%
	In school	9	7	77.8%	2	22.2%
	Dropped out	21	7	33.3%	14	66.7%
	Subtotal	47	17	36.2%	30	63.8%
2	Graduated	6	2	33.3%	4	66.7%
	In school	6	3	50.0%	3	50.0%
	Dropped out	13	1	7.7%	12	92.3%
	Subtotal	25	6	24.0%	19	76.0%
3	Graduated	18	3	16.7%	15	83.3%
	In school	2	0	0.0%	2	100.0%
	Dropped out	11	0	0.0%	11	100.0%
	Subtotal	31	3	9.7%	28	90.3%
4	Graduated	20	0	0.0%	20	100.0%
	In school	0	0	100.0%	0	0.0%
	Dropped out	10	1	10.0%	9	90.0%
	Subtotal	30	1	3.3%	29	96.7%
Grand Total		133	27	20.3%	106	79.7%

Note: Student transfers to other districts are excluded.

Were students served in after-school, summer school, and /or ESL Academy more successful than those supported only in ESL?

While the key finding is that only one in five students in the 2008-09 participated in these extra ESL supports, it is interesting to examine the relationship of program participation to student success in an exploratory way. Results are not conclusive but do suggest areas for further study with stronger research designs.

Statistical evidence did not support the notion that those in the cohort receiving one or more extra ESL services would be more likely to graduate (chi-square p-value 0.0807). A separate chi-square analysis did find that students who are still in school in 2012-13 were more likely than graduates or dropouts to have received extra support (p-value 0.0014).

When we examine the success of the few students who did participate in these programs, we found that 10 of 12 (83%) of the cohort's summer school participants and 4 of 6 (67%) of the after-school participants had either graduated or were still in school as of March 2013. For ESL Academy participants, the percentage is lower (at 44%), but this program supports only those with the most limited English ability, see Table 17.

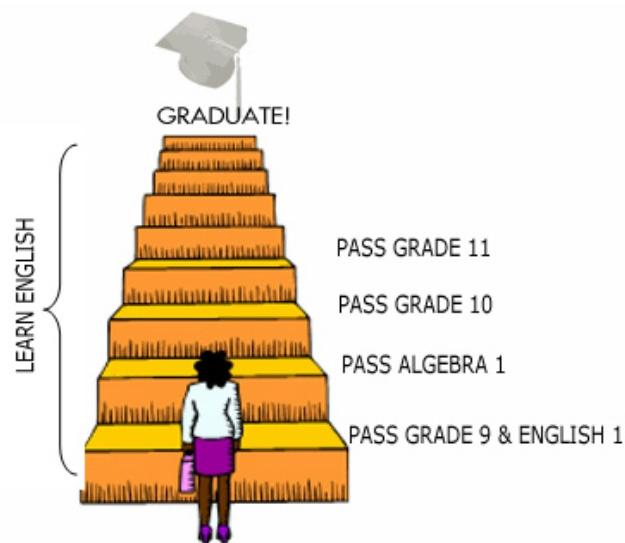
ESL teachers who were interviewed believed that the sheltered instruction offered to the ESL Academy participants is desirable for students with little or no English. In fact, at least one school without an ESL Academy has offered its own introductory sheltered English course to these students. The dropout rate of the ESL Academy participants should be considered a reflection of the challenges faced by these students rather than the success of this type of program.

Conclusion

LEP graduation rates and other success indicators are low for those who do not enter WCPSS until grade 9. Yet our expectations must be high for students new to the U.S. who enter our high schools with little English. While students do increase their English proficiency over time, it is difficult for many to pass language-heavy coursework simultaneously. Intensive support is likely to be needed for those with the lowest initial English proficiency.

Students can graduate without sufficient English to exit LEP status, but they need sufficient proficiency to pass their course work. Passing English I and Algebra 1 are stumbling blocks to graduation for many of these students. While English I is often considered to be a major hurdle for these students, Algebra I and other subject areas can also hold them back. Students seem to be able to "survive" one retention, but more than one is difficult to overcome.

In terms of factors that support graduation, an examination of the value of program supports beyond ESL during the school day was inconclusive. At this point, we can only conclude that these extra ESL supports reach relatively few of the ESL students and appear to help some of those who participate. Participation rates were definitely lower than would be desirable (only one in five of the cohort overall and one in three of those with the lowest English proficiency). Finding ways to increase participation and studying effectiveness more systematically are areas for further work. Teachers suggest those most likely to graduate have strong academic backgrounds in their native language, are highly motivated, and/or are highly supported. While prior schooling is out of the district's control, finding ways to motivate students and help them understand the value of a diploma should be explored.



Recommendations

Finding ways to reduce the high dropout rate and increase the graduation rate for high school students entering WCPSS with limited English is a huge challenge—particularly given recent budget cuts in ESL allotments from the state. However, our findings do point out gaps in services, participation, and student outcomes which merit further discussion and action. Thinking “outside the box” could lead to some creative ways to support students’ success. A discussion of the implications of the findings with key central staff led to the following recommendations.

Create and maintain a long-term plan to boost student performance and raise graduation rates for students entering high school as LEP. While all grades should be covered, special attention should be paid to grade 9 as students transition to a new type of school and usually a new country and city. Key strategies to consider include:

- Establishing regional high school ESL centers in order to provide more intensive support (e.g., sheltered English instruction and/or parent liaisons) and decrease students’ sense of isolation
- Encouraging individual student needs and promoting application to early colleges, leadership academies, the alternative high school, or the new Career and Technical Education (CTE) high school as appropriate. This would apply to middle school LEP newcomers; it would likely require exceptions to normal guidelines for enrollment for high school newcomers.
- Providing more electronic supports (e.g., Rosetta Stone, ESL Study Island, electronic translator tools) and personal supports (e.g., coordinated effort to provide bilingual tutors—who might be volunteers)
- Expanding purposeful scheduling (especially at grade 9 for bridging courses)
- Training all teachers in schools with a high number of ESL students on cultural diversity and recommended ways to support these students. For example, it may be that more students could succeed in English I in ninth grade with tailored instruction and support.
- Increasing parents’ understanding of and access to ways they can support their children and the school.

Contacting WCPSS schools and other districts with higher graduation rates for LEP students to see what has been successful for them would be one avenue to check for ideas and strategies. Those contacted should be asked for data on the success of the strategy. ESL teachers could also ask students about why they did not participate in existing supports such as after-school and summer programs in case barriers can be addressed.

This long-range plan should be shared with all high schools as well as key central staff (e.g., the Grants Administration Office in case grant or foundation funding becomes available). D&A should be consulted about ways to pilot new strategies so impact can be assessed. The plan should be revisited and updated annually.

Review supports currently available to LEP students in WCPSS high schools with lower LEP graduation rates; consider short-term improvements. Brainstorm and arrive at a plan for short-term improvements that are possible. Issues to discuss include:

- The adequacy of academic assistance currently available for LEP students within classes and on a supplemental basis.
- How scheduling is handled, particularly at grade 9, and particularly for bridging courses (and whether courses are now full)
- Social/personal supports available to LEP students (e.g., student buddies or adult mentors beyond the ESL teachers) to build relationships, convey a sense of caring, and check completion of assignments. The availability of mentors or buddies who speak the students' language should be determined.

These conversations could take place through Assistant Superintendents or their assistants and/or through ESL central staff. The goal would be to share options for improvement based on schools with higher graduation rates who have similar student bodies and challenges (or research).

Identify and utilize a set of early warning indicators to periodically check student status and provide added support as needed. Early warning indicators that students are in danger of dropping out or not graduating would allow more appropriate placement and early intervention for incoming LEP ninth graders as well as high school students as they progress through the school year. Possible indicators include:

- Initial English proficiency and progress towards proficiency over time, with those with the most limited English proficiency at highest risk of not graduating and in need of the most intensive support
- Prior schooling, with those with more limited formal schooling or weak academic records needing the most support
- Grades of D or F each quarter in ninth grade courses (especially English I and Algebra I)
- Multiple absences, with a threshold set to trigger personal intervention.

Some of these measures would be available only within the school. Others might be built available through Power School or periodic student listings from the Data and Accountability Department. A more sophisticated system of early warnings might take additional resources long-term.

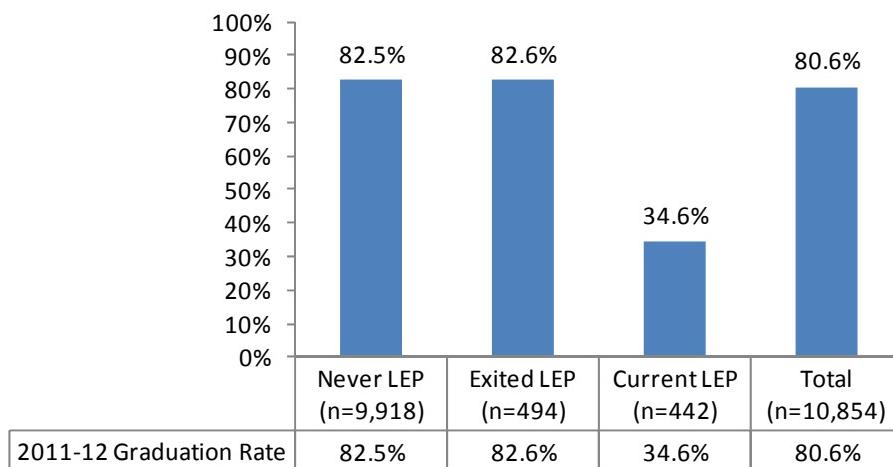
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Appendix A: Four Year Graduation Rates by LEP Status 2011-12 (2008-09 cohort)

Four-year graduation rates for the 2008-09 cohort were disaggregated by LEP status: Never LEP, Exited LEP, Current LEP. As shown below, students who had exited LEP status and those who were never LEP actually had the same graduation rate. Thus, WCPSS students who enter as LEP but have time to master English sufficiently are quite successful in WCPSS. On the other hand, the state rate for “Current LEP” includes only those who were LEP as their last status within WCPSS. Thus, students who dropped out as LEP and who remained LEP in 12th grade are reflected. If the students in the Current LEP and Exited LEP categories are combined, the graduation rate is 59.9%.

Figure A1
2011-12 Four-Year Graduation Rate



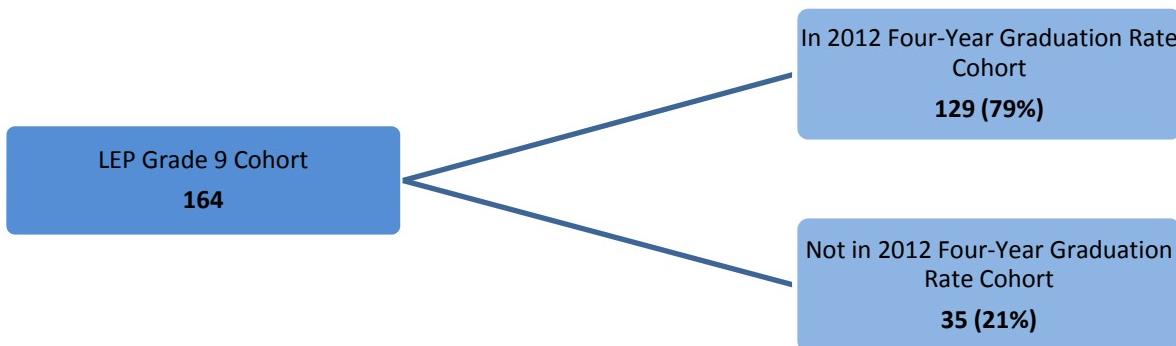
Source: 2011-12 4-Year Cohort Graduation Rate File (NC DPI)

D&A Contact: Roger Regan

Appendix B: 2008-09 Grade 9 LEP Cohort Description

The grade 9 LEP cohort consists of 164 students who entered grade 9 in WCPSS in 2008-09, had a language other than English on their Home Language Survey, and took the entrance exam (W-APT), and qualified as LEP. Of these students, 129 were in the 2012 WCPSS four-year graduation rate cohort (Figure B1). Students who were not in the graduation cohort either had been in grade 9 prior to 2008-09 or transferred out of WCPSS before the end of the 2011-12 school year.

Figure B1
Grade 9 LEP Cohort Inclusion in 2012 Four-Year Graduation Cohort



The 2012 WCPSS four-year graduation rate cohort includes students who entered grade 9 for the first time in the 2008-09 school year and who had an exit code determined by NC DPI to be included in the Local Education Agency (LEA) graduation rate calculation. Graduation cohort students each have an exit code to indicate the status at the end of the four year period.

Appendix C: LEP Case Study Questions

- 1. When helping students with different levels of English proficiency,**
 - What characteristics do you feel an LEP student may have that would contribute to their success in high school? Prompts (if not mentioned):
 - English Proficiency?
 - Home language?
 - Family resources (such as income, time, computer)?
 - Family involvement and push for education?
 - Someone in home with strong English?
 - Family education?
 - Previous formal education?
 - What characteristics do you feel an LEP student may possess that would present challenges to their success in high school?
 - What skills or personal strengths help you in working with students of different proficiency levels?
 - What are the biggest challenges you face when working with students of different proficiency levels?
- 2. What supports are available to LEP students in your school?**
 - As the ESL teacher, what services do you provide directly to students?
 - How do you collaborate with other teachers and other staff at your school to support students with different levels of English proficiency? Do you provide any other indirect services?
 - What other supports are available to these students (prompt: bridging courses, Smart Lunch, SuccessMaker)? Which do you find to be most useful?
 - Beyond English proficiency, what else is important to consider when determining which programs and strategies to provide a new LEP student?
- 3. Thinking about how you use data to make decisions,**
 - Do you trust W-APT to provide a valid assessment of your students' English proficiency? If not, what else do you find helpful? How do you use W-APT/ACCESS test results (aside from determining LEP status)?
 - Do you provide different strategies and programs to each LEP student?
 - How do you adjust strategies for students with low versus high proficiency?
4. What do you find is the biggest stumbling block for LEP students who enter high school without a strong command of English? (Prompt with courses if not mentioned)
5. If you could add a support at your school for LEP students, what would it be?

Appendix D: Breakdown of K-12 LEP MOEs for 2013-14 by half positions

Projected Number of LEP Students	Traditional Calendar		Year-Round Calendar	
	Months of Employment	Teaching Positions	Months of Employment	Teaching Positions
0-18	2	0.2	3	0.25
19-55	5	0.5	6	0.5
56-92	10	1.0	12	1.0
93-129	15	1.5	18	1.5
130-166	20	2.0	24	2.0
167-203	25	2.5	30	2.5
204-240	30	3.0	36	3.0
241+	35	3.5	42	3.5

Source: Wake County Public School System ESL Office, March 2013

Note: MOEs = Months of Employment

Appendix E: Extra Supports offered by Schools

School Name	ESL Academy	2010-11	2011-12
		Summer School Site	After-School Program Site
Apex High			x x
Athens Drive High			
Broughton High		x	
Cary High	2008-09 to present		x x
East Wake High (all)*			
Enloe High		x	
Fuquay-Varina High			x x
Garner High	2008-09 to 2011-12		
Green Hope High			
Heritage High		x	x
Holly Springs High		x	x
Knightdale High			
Leesville High			
Longview School			
Middle Creek High		x	x
Millbrook High			
Panther Creek High			
Phillips High			
Sanderson High		x	x
Southeast Raleigh High			
Wake Early College			
Wake Forest-Rolesville High			x
Wake NC State STEM			
Wake Young Men's Academy		These schools were both newly opened in 2012-13.	
Wake Young Women's Academy		These schools were both newly opened in 2012-13.	
Wakefield High	2008-09 to 2010-11		

*The four East Wake high schools share a campus and some resources, including one ESL teacher, and are counted together as one school for this study.